



Port St. Lucie, Fla., Family Taps into Virtual Assistant Market.



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By Susan Port, The Palm Beach Post, Fla. Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News

Aug. 4--PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla.--Ann Marie Rubertone wanted a job where she didn't have to leave her house but could use her skills in research, writing, marketing and computer know-how.

Some research on the Internet gave her the answer: Become a virtual assistant.

"We're not strapped to the desk working," Rubertone said. "I can pick up my son from school. I don't have to answer to anyone."

A virtual assistant does everything a secretary or administrative assistant would do except offsite: Word processing, bookkeeping, travel arrangements, database management, event planning, and even helping the boss get a last-minute anniversary gift.

In most cases, such assistants work with clients across the country, who hand out instructions via e-mail or fax.

And even though the profession, like the technology that makes it possible, is relatively new, there is a trade group already, and Angela Allen is its president.

"As a result of downsizing and cutbacks, we are seeing more virtual assistants," said Allen, president of the Los Angeles-based International Virtual Assistants Association, and a virtual assistant in Kentucky since 2000. ...

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